

Dear Ed,

8/18/72

As usual, clips with your 8/14 I'll read between other things, later.

It opens in a way that interests me because it involves a friend who was had. The last word I'd had about what you call "The Turner, Asinof, Hinkle book" is that it was in trouble and that T and H were thoroughly disgusted with it. I guess that's why they had to bring another writer in. Dilutes the return, anyway. That it is to appear in the October Playboy indicates it is on its way to production. I'll be interested in seeing what does appear. I imagine it will be devoted to the Kaplan-Vidal case.

Literary thievery has become one of the major problems of the "critical" community. Aside from the power of the opposition, I'd say it was the single most repressive force we have had to contend with. There has been remarkably little original work and an enormous amount of stealing, rewriting, imagining and even inventing. The newest self-disclosures of those Jerry calls of "good conscience" are, even to me, astounding, for they permit no vestige of innocence and they come from the one I'd have been least likely to believe capable of it.

From the time I first met him, I've had no use for Turner. Hal Verb introduced me to him in SF in 12/66. I then had such an experience with Turner. It was enough to keep me from trusting him. But I'm inclined to take a more charitable view than you, despite the fact that to my knowledge he is an utter and complete incompetent in investigating and an uninhibited literary thief. I've had the painful experience of living with this kind of thing and it has given me some kind of insight into the practitioners. Their problems are as much in their heads as in their ethics and morals. Thus they easily persuade themselves that wrong is right and that whatever they do is right and proper because they do it with what they tell themselves is lofty motive.

If I had to isolate the worst single influence on Garrison I'd say it was Turner, again from my own observations. Boxley was devoted to Jim, genuinely, I think, and fed back what Jim dreamed up, aided, abetted and confirmed by Turner. I have copies of their original work on the Bradley mess. No cub reporter would have taken a second look at that swill or its sub-gutter source. Bradley is a monster, which made them go for it. The last intimate talk I had with Jim after I had the searing obligation to blow that entire operation was one in which I had to persuade him that Turner was not a federal agent sent to earn his trust and ruin him. That was the ~~week~~ week that was. I began it by trying to kill his release calling Boxley the CIA's top agent. I don't believe he then was any kind, and the feedback pattern was only too apparent. But Jim's ego had to be assuaged. I was then wrong in believing that Boxley had never been CIA. The wierd thing is that this is what he most resented, not the blowing of his "case", which I did from his own work alone. When I was last in Dallas he insisted on meeting with me for the purpose of proving he had been CIA, and the mass he showed me was indeed persuasive. So, I suppose the shrinks and his drinking led to the end of that.

Now, with the the pattern, let me tell you that Ramparts had a woman reporter in Mexico. It hired her to look into the Kaplan-Vidal matter for Ramparts. Aside from her, and I believe a writers unpublished work remains the property of the writer, ownership could have rested with Ramparts only. When Hinkle left he took that with him. It is the same as, probably more than, Turner gave Garrison. This is the basis of that book, the work of another, and because the work was incomplete, the book had to have serious problems, the more so because the problems required the solving of those who appear to have done no work. It is like expecting to have a loaf of bread after stealing most of the ingredients of what goes into the oven. Aside from the fact that the woman who did the work, and her work was quite good, she accomplished the close to impossible, is my friend, I have come to detest this no longer minor industry that has grown up among us. So, I have this extra interest in anything you may learn.

I agree with you that Turner is neither psychotic nor stupid. But I can't go farther. I don't think he was any kind of agent and don't think he did the evil he did for money, not, at least, for pay. I see the alternative you do not see, and it is more difficult to see because he is pleasant, personable, and everyone is impressed with his credentials. I think he may well be one of the few agents Hoover ever fired for incompetence. I'm telling you he couldn't do the simplest kind of questioning of willing witnesses and come up with anything, and I'm going on personal experience for which I'll not now take time. But if you want to explore this further when you are here again ask me about the Dean case and I'll give you some transcripts. An actor on the telephone, a man who had a crippling fear that

he'd not be able to do the simple thing I'd asked of him, got much more in that single phoneconversation that Turner, with that in hand, subsequently did when asked to carry it further by this actor and Maggie Fields. In fact, Turner would never let anyone, especially me, ever see whatever notes he made. That was the world's most willing witness. I had turned him on by radio. Nothing further came of it until I was in the LA area again in 2/68 when damned if I didn't turn him on by radio again--and without mentioning his name or even having him in mind. He phoned the station while I was still there and I phoned him back and he came to where I was staying. No trouble getting him to bring his files, or to agree to taping. But the permeating incompetence is such that the people I was staying with couldn't even get his bag of stuff xeroxed before turning him off, frightening him to death. He may well have had the missing clues to some aspects in that bag. The stuff he showed me showed continuing FBI interest in some of the people involved long after the Report was out.

His book on the radical right is entirely unoriginal and in almost every case I could pinpoint his source. This is a bit different, for there is nothing wrong with using standard sources, but there is everything wrong in pretending originality.

I've never met Mae but I've spoken to her several times. She is pretty far out. I knew from a young man who stopped off here a while back that Krassner was impressed with her imaginings, but the newsletter is news. I had heard he was going to do a Realist inreality on it.

Ordinarily I'd not take this time for such a subject, but you read such an enormous amount and have such good sources, I think it would help you to understand, therefore I give you this view and I believe it to be either the correct one or the closest we can now come to it. There are many of these people who have what to them is sincere, decent concern. I don't doubt they really feel that way. But they do nothing and can do nothing, and the more they try and the less they do, the more persuaded they become that they must, so they steal and embroider and conceive that they possess singular genius and do acts of public service by misusing the work of others, not even conceiving it is possible they misuse. I really do think all these people really believe their own guff and are sincere. However, you should also understand that the incompetence with many of the Ramparts people is on this one subject and its ramifications. I wish I had the tape I'd been promised of the appearance I made with Keating at Golden Gate Park in mid-December 1966. Inadvertently and under some pressure he blurted rather much out. That far back. They have done some really great work on other subjects, fine work. Often, I suppose, it is because there are not too many places to which the stuff can be taken today, and they are the unearning inheritors, but the fact remains that we are much indebted to many of them for some really fine things. This subject is an exception. Hinkle also laid an egg with the issue that may have been the coup de grace for Seanlon's. That was baby stuff compared to what is available, the same being true of The Anarchist's Cookbook, which I've seen but don't own. Hell, I got more on that ghoulish subject and its ramifications from a single source that to this day I've never met. I guess another way of putting it is the shoemaker and his last. This is not theirs and they suffer compulsions.

In any event, I'd like to be kept up to date on this coming book. Best,